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Approved For Release 2005/04/21 : CIA-RDP78T02095R000800040027-9

5-2467

25 September 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR:

25X1A

ATTENTION :

SUBJECT : Evaluation of the Roadwatch Program

1. Attached hereto is an evaluation of the Roadwatch Program
as requested by you on 20 September.

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Distribution:

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Evaluation of the Roadwatch Program

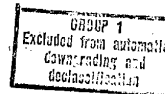
by

The Office of Economic Research

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Evaluation of the Roadwatch Program
by
The Office of Economic Research
(25 September 1967)

I. Use of Information Derived from Roadwatch Program

The Office of Economic Research (OER) uses the information derived from the Roadwatch Program for two principal purposes:

1. To prepare reports based on roadwatch information showing the comparative levels of truck traffic entering Laos and moving within Laos. These reports have been prepared weekly since 1964 primarily for the Watch Committee, but wide dissemination is given them throughout the intelligence community. They contribute to an assessment of Communist intentions with respect to Laos and South Vietnam.

2. To prepare estimates of the movement of supplies from North Vietnam and Cambodia to the Communists in Laos and South Vietnam. These estimates are required for studies prepared for the policy level in the government including National Intelligence Estimates.

In spite of the limitations of the information derived from the Roadwatch Program the data derived from it represent the most definitive we have for the purposes stated above.

II. Limitations and Weaknesses of Roadwatch Information

We recognize that most of the problems which provide the limitations and weaknesses in the roadwatch data are due to field conditions and may be insoluble. They, nevertheless, make analysis of the data extremely difficult, and detract substantially from the validity of the estimates derived from this source. The most pressing problem has been the lack of a team on Route 912, the alternate route to the Mu Gia Pass for the Laotian Panhandle. Other problems arise from inconsistent and sporadic reporting from the various teams. Some teams are in place and report for only a few days each week or month, others observe for 24 hours, and some for six to 12 hours. Teams in the same general area and observing the same

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route report considerable differences between numbers, times, and direction of trucks passing them on the same day. Only rarely do the teams report the type of truck observed and supply information on the contents of trucks and whether they are loaded or empty.

In spite of these limitations the information derived is generally useful in indicating trends, and except for the lack of reporting on Route 912, serve as a useful input in assessing Communists intentions. Real problems exist, however, in trying to estimate the volume of supplies moved from North Vietnam and Cambodia to the Communists in Southern Laos and South Vietnam.

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III. Improvements Noted in the Roadwatch Program

We have noted continued efforts to improve the roadwatch program over the past few years.

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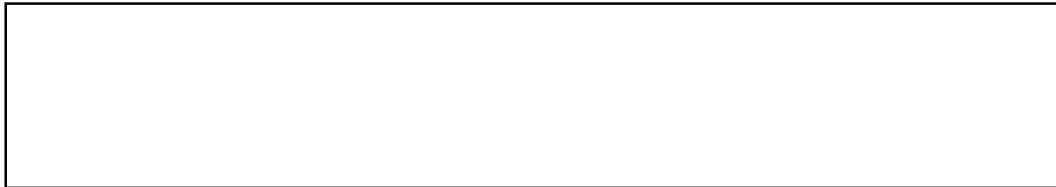
The change in the format of the report has made it considerably easier to analyze, and the policy of informing the users of the reports when teams change positions has made more meaningful the analysis of the information contained in the reports. Finally, the

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IV. Suggestions for Further Improvement of the Roadwatch Program

Suggestions for improvement naturally follow from the limitations of the roadwatch program outlined above. We realize that many of these suggestions may be difficult to implement in view of the operational problems, the personnel involved, the terrain, and enemy action.

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As precise information cannot be obtained somewhat less than precise information on the size and type of trucks and nature of cargoes would aid in our analysis. Some of this information is reported in cycles, or by certain teams and not by others. For example, the type and size of trucks moving through Mu Gia Pass were reported during the TET truce period, but there have been very few reports identifying trucks since then. It would be helpful if teams stated "most of the trucks passing are of the _____ type", and thereafter note when trucks are of different types or are unidentified. A similar type statement could be used for cargoes, such as "trucks moving south generally carry _____, and moving north are empty". Changes in the traffic patterns could be noted in subsequent reports.

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